

Message Text

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R 080353Z DEC 73
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

S E C R E T STATE 240811

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:MARR, TH
SUBJECT:US FORCE LEVELS IN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 18559

1. WE HAVE BEEN REASSURED BY VARIOUS STATEMENTS OF RTG LEADERS FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER UPHEAVAL INDICATING THAT THEY ARE NOW PRESSING FOR SUBSTANTIAL FURTHER US FORCE WITHDRAWALS AT THE SAME TIME WE ARE AWARE OF POTENTIAL PUBLIC AGITATION AGAINST OUR PRESENCE. WE ARE ALSO SENSITIVE TO THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY GENERAL KRIANGSAK, AS REPORTED REFTTEL, OVER CURRENT PRESSURE FROM STUDENTS AND FOREIGN MINISTRY AND OF HIS DESIRE FOR SOME TOKEN WITHDRAWALS AS A PALLIATIVE.

2. AT THE SAME TIME WITH THE UNCERTAINTY OF HANOI'S INTENTIONS DURING THIS DRY SEASON, WE CONTINUE TO VIEW OUR MILITARY FORCES IN THAILAND AS A CRITICAL FACTOR. WE WANT TO MAINTAIN A MAXIMUM DETERRENT AND TO AVOID ANY ACTIONS THAT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED BY HANOI AS SIGNALLING OUR WILLINGNESS OR INTENT TO REDUCE THAT DETERRENT SUBSTANTIALLY IN

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THE MONTHS AHEAD.

3. WEIGHING OUR CONCERNS ABOUT INDOCHINA AGAINST THE POLITICAL RISKS IN THAILAND, IT HAS BEEN CONCLUDED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL THAT WE SHOULD UNDERTAKE NO FURTHER FORCE REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND PRIOR TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE FY74

DRY SEASON. SHOULD INTERNAL PRESSURES DEVELOP IN THAILAND THAT WOULD REQUIRE SOME TOKEN WITHDRAWALS AS KRIANGSAK HAS SUGGESTED, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO WITHDRAW SOME UNESSENTIAL NON-STRIKE AIRCRAFT. WE WOULD HOPE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE RTG, TO RESUME WITHDRAWALS OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT ABOUT MAY 1.

4. FORCE REDUCTION PLANNING WILL INCLUDE A REVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS FOR VARIOUS HEADQUARTERS AND SUPPORT UNITS WITH A VIEW TO ELIMINATING OR CONSOLIDATING WHERE POSSIBLE, IN ORDER TO FURTHER REDUCE OUR OVER-ALL MILITARY PRESENCE, PARTICULARLY IN BANGKOK.

5. IN CONNECTION WITH FUTURE WITHDRAWALS, CONCURRENT STUDY IS BEING UNDERTAKEN OF EQUIPMENT THAT COULD BE LEFT BEHIND FOR TURNOVER TO THE THAIS AS UNITS ARE WITHDRAWN. CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THAI DESIRES AND VALID REQUIREMENTS, ON THE ONE HAND, AND TO US EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS AND RELEVANT LEGAL, OPERATIONAL AND BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS ON THE OTHER.

6. YOU MAY INFORM RTG OF THE ABOVE, STRESSING OUR VIEW THAT THE REGIONAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS UPON WHICH OUR POSITION IS BASED ARE FULLY CONSONANT WITH THAILAND'S OWN SECURITY INTERESTS.

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